



MEETING MINUTES / 16 JANUARY 2017

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Farley, Showell, Armbruster, Baldwin, Lardizzone, McMullen, Newman, Sarg, and Stewart **60%**

Absences: Bradley, Johnson, Lopez, Magner, Newstadt, and Seppala

Guests: Ginny Yelland (Wilmington VAMC), Bill Peterson (Delaware Veterans Home), Jessica Finan, Pat Cerchio (First State Women Warriors), Vivian Starnes (DAV Auxiliary), Kim McMullen, Saad Soliman (Peer Mentoring Center), Mark Taylor (VA Community Outreach), John Richter (Sussex Vet Center)

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS:

Requested moment of silence for the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive

MEETING MINUTES:

Newman requested minutes change of term "cooti" to "cotie"

Approved with changes, motions: Lardizzone and McMullen

ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

Wilmington VAMC – Ginny Yelland, Public Affairs (via telephone)

Facility is receiving training to update time keeping process

Interviewing for Chief of Staff Position

Region is consolidating human resources office, will not oversee Lebanon and Wilmington

Sussex CBOC experienced a septic system malfunction that caused a one day closure

Sussex CBOC is having radiology equipment installed

Quality data show clinic improvement, especially with satisfaction data

Telehealth has 10 patients to consider, consults must be submitted from Delaware Veterans Home, generally behavioral health patients

(Newman) Is there an update on the benefits building?

Awaiting a permanent fix plan

- How to transfer workers out to do repairs

Mark Taylor, Outreach, introduced himself and described his duties

Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) – Bill Peterson, Director:

85 residents

Flu epidemic is a concern, residents' testing was negative

Admissions meeting is scheduled for the first week in February

Gold Unit delays are related to drainage and electricity issues

- Possible March completion

Blue Unit is being considered for a bathing suite

Dining room expansion is moving forward

New admissions nurse is expected to be in place by the end of February

Interviews are being set up for an analysis position

Telehealth is moving forward, the consult process has been resolved and an MOU is in place

Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:

15 Males, 4 females, and 2 children (toys are requested)

Annual inspection is taking place this week

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Saad Soliman, Executive Director, Peers Mentoring Center (via Commissioner Showell)

History with Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, and State Courts

Focused on assisting re-entry from incarceration

Property, in Middletown, for veteran housing, approximately 8 acres

Residents would receive taxidermy training on site, ability to earn income

Behavioral health employees will be on site

Target population, homeless men, honorable discharge

- Capacity of seven occupants

Employment opportunities through Department of Health and Social Services

Organization has 17 homes, this is the first proposed veteran structure

Pat Cerchio, First State Women Warriors

Seeking photographs for Women's Memorial

Next memorial meeting 15 February, Tatnall building

COMMITTEE REPORTS:**Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Armbruster:**

Interments – 74

Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:

Interments - 29

Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:

Employment Oversight Commission is a good information resource for veteran employment

HB 319 highlights veterans with disabilities coverage

To study Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), Delaware needs a TBI data registry

Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen:

Legislative proposals are complete

Grant and Aide will be presented as a separate bill

Seeking ways to know when veteran-centric bills are being presented by the General Assembly

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:

Commissioner McMullen (AFSA)

Chapter budget was passed during 10 January meeting

Volunteer committee is looking to become more active

Division convention is scheduled for 8 – 11 March in Baltimore, MD

Commissioner Armbruster (AL)

Oratorical program is scheduled for 15 February / 1800 at the Wilmington VAMC

National Commander's visit is 14 – 16 March

Departmental Convention is 12 – 14 July

Boys State registration materials have been sent to state schools

Meet and greet at Interstate 95 rest stop

- Seeks out veterans and encourages membership

- Received flag flown in combat zone as a thank you from an Afghanistan service member met during a stop

Commissioner Bradley (AMVETS)

Not present

Commissioner Lardizzone (DAV)

Wilmington VAMC will have a full-time DAV National Service Officer, Gerald Loudon, at their benefits office beginning February 2018

Attended funeral for past Departmental Commander's spouse at Millsboro Cemetery on 6 January

Attended Wilmington VAMC VSO meeting on 9 January

Commissioner Johnson (KWVA)

Not present

Commissioner Farley (MCL)

Finalizing Toys for Tots data

Commissioner Sarg (MOAA)

Representative Blunt-Rochester is the scheduled keynote speaker for the 20 January meeting

- Will focus on national level service member and veteran issues

JROTC scholarship event is scheduled for the Greene Turtle on 22 February

- Percentage from meals purchased will supplement the scholarship

Commissioner Magner (MOPH)

Departmental meeting was 13 January

Departmental conference is scheduled for 19 May at Dover Downs

Author Mark Bowden is scheduled for a book discussion (Hue 1968) at the Bear library on 17 January / 1900

25th annual brunch at Cavaliers is being scheduled for April

Commissioner Newman (VFW)

Student veterans discussed continuing resolution 31 during the previous council meeting

Sussex County meeting was held to limit non-profit organizations to only three annual fundraising events, will seek additional information

Commissioner Baldwin (VVA)

Judy Campbell is seeking assistance fundraising for Gold Star Families Memorial

Working toward gaining on-line DVTF donations

There is a need for vocation education in high schools

- Amazon cannot retain logistics workers and a possibly seeking veterans with logistics experience

(Sarg) Amazon may want to consider being a part of the Dover AFB Transition Summit, 12 April, to solicit candidates

The previously mentioned Adaptive Housing Grant request was expedited by the Philadelphia VA Regional Office, the grant helped a veteran receive housing reimbursement

Alarmed with the number of young people dying from drug overdoses, especially former Delaware Military Academy students, 25 Wilmington young people have been lost

Commissioner Showell (At Large)

Delaware National Guard Prayer Breakfast is 13 February / 0630 at Cavaliers Golf Club

State of the Guard briefing is 22 February / 0800 at the Biden Center

Commissioner Newstadt (At Large)

Not present

Commissioner Seppala (At Large)

Not present

Commissioner Lopez (At Large)

Delaware Women's Memorial meetings have been successful

Post 1 has new officers and is sponsoring a Valentines Dinner on 10 February

Post 2 donated \$20K toward benevolent causes and is sponsoring a Valentines Dinner on 13 February

Post 2 installation dinner is 3 March

Delaware Stand Down Kickoff meeting is 25 January / 1330 at the DCVA

Women's Veterans Tea is scheduled for 24 March / 1400

Commissioner Stewart (At Large)

Wilmington University veteran students served Christmas Day lunch at the Delaware Veterans Home

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

DVTF: Requests 4, Granted 4 (100%), Awarded \$5,741.60 and Balance \$69,000.00

TERM EXPIRATION:

None

EVENTS:

Listed on agenda

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Submit Legislative Recommendations (CLOSED)

NEW BUSINESS:

None

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:

The Department of Veterans Affairs is seeking seven cities to lead the Challenge to End Veterans Suicide

- Dover's Mayor has submitted an application

SPECIAL SESSION:

The Commissioners met on Friday, 8 February to vote on the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Proposal to Amend the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund. All commissioner voted in-person, via telephone, or via email and Executive Director Kirby (non-voter) was present.

Chairman Farley's meeting synopsis is listed below:

DE VETERANS TRUST FUND - VFW PROPOSAL TO AMEND

Meeting convened at 1210, after all call-ins were accepted

Physically present - Farley, Sarg, McMullen, Lardizzone

Call-ins - Showell, Armbruster, Baldwin, Bradley, Lopez, Newman, Newstadt, Seppala, Stewart

Email/text - Johnson, Magner, Newstadt

Chairman

Opening Statement

Thank you all for attending this meeting, either in person or by phone. Those who could not attend in person or by phone have been afforded the opportunity to participate by email or text message, and some have chosen that option.

Each Commissioner has received a copy of Commissioner Newman's proposal on behalf of the VFW recommending changes to the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund.

You will recall that, at our last regular commission meeting on January 16, our agenda included the intention to vote on the VFW recommendation; however, Commissioner Newman was not prepared to make a formal presentation of that recommendation at that time and, in the interest of fairness, we offered him the opportunity to present a motion at another time or at our next meeting. Since then, Commissioner Newman has provided that recommendation and that is what was distributed to each commissioner for consideration. Also, in the interest of fairness and to ensure our legislative agenda is up to date before the General Assembly comes back in session, we decided to call this special meeting for consideration of Commissioner Newman's recommendation.

For clarification, the Commission does not have the authority to re-write the law establishing the Delaware Trust Fund, nor to expand the eligibility requirements of that law. Today, we are considering whether to accept the recommendation made by the VFW, as stated in Commissioner Newman's written proposal, and to include that recommendation in our Legislative Agenda to be presented to the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee of the Delaware General Assembly.

Has everyone reviewed Commissioner Newman's recommendation and are you prepared to discuss and vote on a motion to include that recommendation in our Legislative Agenda?

Discussion:

Considerations:

1. The Delaware Veterans Trust Fund is a state program established by the Delaware General Assembly specifically to "provide financial assistance or grants to honorably discharged veterans...."
2. The Delaware Veterans Trust Fund is separate from any program established by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and receives no funding or other assistance from the VA.
3. The Delaware General Assembly has the right to establish programs to benefit Delaware citizens and to establish specific eligibility parameters for such programs. In the case of the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund, the General Assembly established that the trust fund would provide financial assistance or grants to "honorably discharged veterans".
4. No part of the establishment of the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund precludes or prevents Delaware veterans, their spouses or their dependents from accessing any VA benefit to which they might be eligible.
5. The DCVA is tasked to administer Delaware Trust Fund to provide financial assistance or grants to honorably discharged veteran in accordance with the provision of the Delaware law.
6. Administration of the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund does not preclude the DCVA from assisting veterans, their spouses and their dependents to access any VA benefit to which they might be eligible. For this purpose, the DCVA appoints a Veteran Service officer in each county, administer two veterans cemeteries, and the veterans home, and performs such other functions as may be necessary to aid veterans, their spouses or their dependents in accessing benefits for which they might be eligible. One example is the statewide program to coordinate efforts to end veteran homelessness in Delaware, which has aided veterans, regardless of character of discharge, has resulted in permanent housing for 683 previously homeless veterans and has been recognized by the White House and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Discussion

Armbruster - he polled American Legion - they know we advise, we don't propose legislation, VFW should have polled their members and provided a proposal voted on by their members.

Showell - the state does provide \$25,000 each year in the Department of State Budget as seed money for the Trust Fund

Baldwin - Does the state provided any funding for trust fund

Bradley - could vote to include General Under Honorable, but not spouses and the rest of the proposal

Johnson - no by email

Lardizzone - in discussion with members of the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee he was told that they would make no changes to the trust fund

Lopez - would expanding coverage add to DCVA administrative burden - Kirby answered yes

Magner - abstain by email - willing to consider General Under Honorable only, not spouses or others
Newman - made the motion, still in favor. VFW is making presentation to legislators, also.
Sarg - no change - DCVA and DJF provide support for all veterans and spouses according to eligibility
Seppala - is additional money available to support the recommended changes - Kirby answered NO
Stewart - would more funding be required to support the recommended changes - Kirby answered yes

Motion: Whether to accept the VFW recommendation in its entirety to add to our Legislative Agenda to present to the Joint Veterans Affairs of the Delaware General Assembly with recommendation for amending the law establishing the Delaware Veterans Trust Fund

Vote: See tally sheet - 12 nays, 2 abstain, 1 yea

Farley - No
Showell - No
Armbruster - No
Baldwin - Abstain
Bradley - No
Johnson- NO by email
Lardizzzone- No
Lopez - No
Magner - abstain by email
McMullen - No
Newman - YES
Newstadt - No by email/text
Sarg - No
Seppala - No
Stewart - No

Motion did not carry.
Meeting adjourned at 1235

Semper Fidelis,
Bill Farley
Chairman
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 20 February 2018 at 10:00 AM
LOCATION: Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs Conference Room